

November 6, 2024

To: Mayor and Members of City Council  
From: Sheryl M. M. Long, City Manager  
Subject: RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALK REPAIR ASSISTANCE

**202402319**

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**Reference Document #202401457**

The Council at its session on May 30, 2024, referred the following item for review and report:

MOTION, dated May 14, 2024, submitted by Councilmember Albi, Vice Mayor Kearney and Councilmembers Jeffreys, Walsh, Johnson, and Owens, WE MOVE that the City Administration provide a report within ninety (90) days on the feasibility of setting up a fund to support residential sidewalk repair. This report should include the current financial burden that homeowners face with repairing their sidewalks and potential sources of funding, including from the sale of the Cincinnati Southern Railway, that could support residents.

The following report by the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) provides the current financial burden to homeowners and options for existing funding to support residential sidewalk repair.

**BACKGROUND**

There are approximately 1,800 miles of total sidewalks located in the city rights of way, estimated to be around 50 million square feet. The total sidewalk replacement value at current pricing is estimated at nearly 1 billion dollars.

DOTE has a program in place for sidewalk repair which follows C.M.C. Chapter 721 and Ohio Revised Code Chapter 729. The C.M.C. Sec. 721-147 requires the abutting property owner to maintain the adjacent sidewalk in good condition and free from nuisance.

Currently, due to existing resources, the DOTE Sidewalk Safety Program is a complaint-driven program. DOTE has received 2,028 customer service requests for sidewalk repairs from citizens in 2021-2023. City staff inspect the sidewalks noted in each request for condition or hazards. If repairs are necessary, a notification is sent to property owners to begin the sidewalk repair process.

## **CURRENT COST**

The current financial burden homeowners face for repairing their sidewalks include the physical demolition, removal and construction of new concrete sidewalks and sidewalks through driveways, including associated contractor and permit fees. Once necessary sidewalk repairs are confirmed, the homeowner is notified that they have two (2) options to repair the sidewalk:

- A homeowner can hire their own general contractor to replace the defective walk and drive aprons.
- A homeowner can elect to have the City's general contractor replace the defective walks and drive aprons. If this option is selected, the homeowner is then given the option to "pay in full" or make payments through an assessment that is included in their property taxes over a three-year, five-year, or ten-year term period.

Current 2024 pricing using the City's general contractor is \$19.50 per square foot for removal and replacement of standard 5-inch-thick concrete sidewalk.

Based on DOTE's previous three years of data, the financial burden on residential property owners ranged from a few hundred dollars to over several thousand dollars with the average costs to a property owner being around \$2,500. For example, the current costs of replacing one sidewalk block (5 ft x 5 ft) is approximately \$500, a \$2,500 price tag would equate to replacing five (5) sidewalk blocks. The actual costs to a property owner are site specific as the condemnable sidewalk block widths and lengths differ for each property.

The City maintains the sidewalk around public transit stops and corner curb ramps that benefit users in residential neighborhoods. Also, the City maintains one frontage of residential corner properties with the property owner maintaining the other frontage.

## **FUNDING SOURCE(S)**

Current funding sources available to support residential sidewalk repairs could include the following:

1. **General Capital Funds** that may come from multiple sources.
2. **Tax Increment Finance (TIF)** funds support public infrastructure improvements within the boundary of the TIF District.
3. **Cincinnati Southern Railway** trust disbursements for existing infrastructure, which may include sidewalks within the public right of way.

## **SUMMARY**

DOTe will continue to provide pedestrian safety and accessibility on city sidewalks utilizing the Sidewalk Safety Program. More information can be seen at <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/dote/street-sidewalk-rehab/sidewalk-safety-program/>

## **RECENT ACTIONS**

DOTe has acted on steps to make the Sidewalk Safety Program more efficient and effective and include the following:

1. **Pilot Project** being performed in Hartwell and Carthage neighborhoods utilizing a third-party vendor to inventory existing sidewalk conditions. Scheduled completion by the end of 2024. Should the Pilot Project be successful, DOTe will prepare a strategic plan and cost estimate to inventory all sidewalks.
2. **Public Safety Strategic Initiative Team** participation for Sidewalk Walkability. The Sidewalk Safety Program objective is to reduce the time it takes to repair sidewalks along with reducing the financial burden on property owners. To transition the program from complaint-driven to a more proactive approach for sidewalk maintenance.
3. **Update City Council** on the success of the pilot program and successful initiative tasks.

cc: John S. Brazina, Director, Transportation and Engineering